

Last year, the Energy Committee moved forward with legislation that utilizes the Department of Energy and its national labs to train our teachers and rekindle interest in math and science. We called that bill the PACE—Protecting America's Competitive Edge.

At the end of last session, and again this year, we were able to partner with our leaders, Senator REID and Senator MCCONNELL, and our colleagues on the Commerce and HELP Committees, to put together the comprehensive America COMPETES Act.

Less than 6 percent of high school seniors have plans to study engineering, but 50 percent of our current U.S. science and engineering workforce is approaching retirement age.

By bringing our national labs into the classroom, we can begin to address this problem.

Since the Augustine report emphasizes the need for a renewed focus on basic science and research, this bill authorizes doubling the funding for DOE's Office of Science.

I look forward to working with the House in conference to pass a strong, bipartisan bill that will allow America to rise above the gathering storm and compete once again.

With that, Madam President, once again, I thank Senator BINGAMAN. It has been a pleasure to get another bipartisan bill through with you. If we keep doing this, they are going to be mentioning the Senator from New Mexico so much—mentioning you and then me—they are going to think the whole place is full of Senators from New Mexico. We do not have to worry about that. We will take what we can get and do the best we can with it.

I say to the Senator, thank you, LAMAR, for coming to me and asking: Could I push this with you all? It was a pleasure—and under my chairmanship—to push it with you and for you. It came out very well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). The Senator from New Mexico.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

JACK HICKMAN'S RETIREMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, prior to this job as Democratic leader, I basically lived on the floor for 6 years. I was here from the time the Senate came into session until we went out every day. During that period of time, I got to know staff up here very well because I basically lived with them.

One of the people whom I certainly have gotten to know over that period of time is a man by the name of Jack

Hickman. Since 1996, Jack has worked in the Senate Document Room, has been the executive communications clerk, and is now the morning business editor. When he is here, he sits at the table right in front of me.

Jack is physically a giant of a man, very big. He has a wonderful sense of humor and is very easy to get along with. He loves his alma mater, the University of Wisconsin. One of his sad times was when UNLV beat them once, which was unexpected in a lot of quarters. He follows Wisconsin basketball and all of their sports teams very closely.

Jack has two sons, Paul and Brian. His wife's name is Margaret, and he brags about her all the time.

I want the RECORD to be spread with the fact that it has been an enjoyable experience for me to be able to work with someone of Jack's caliber, to be able to joke with him and make fun of each other in a respectful way on some of our idiosyncracies.

Jack Hickman is going to retire. Tomorrow is his last day here. He and his wife had purchased a place in Florida some time ago. He has been going down there on vacation in our off times. Now he will live there full time.

Jack does, as do all of the Senate personnel, invaluable work for us. He makes sure what we say goes in the right place in the RECORD. He works with the court reporters and the rest of the staff. His work, even though it is not very noteworthy to the public, is essential to the Senate functioning properly.

I will really miss Jack a lot. He is someone with whom I have a real strong comfort level. I look forward, in the years to come, to being able to visit with him again and talk about some of the times we have had. We have spent many hours together on the Senate floor. During those years, I didn't control what we did; I was just here on the floor. We waited for long periods of time for the leader—whether it was a Democratic or Republican leader—to come and take us out at the end of the day. We complained to each other, saying, "I wonder what they are doing." Well, since I got this job, I have a better picture of that. Even though it appears there is nothing going on out here, a lot of times, in the respective leaders' offices, a lot is going on.

Mr. President, I speak about Jack, but in the process I speak of all these people who do so much for us and make us look good.

I wish Jack good luck in his retirement.

RECOGNIZING CHARLES A. SCHOLZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today I congratulate my good friend Charles A. Scholz. On April 29, he will be honored by the Mississippi Valley Council, Boy Scouts of America and presented with the 2007 Distinguished Citizen Award. This commendation recognizes the im-

portant contributions of American men and women to scouting and their community. Charles A. Scholz is certainly deserving of such an award.

Charlie has spent most of his life in Quincy, IL. At 80, he retains fond memories of his years as a Boy Scout in Quincy. Charlie attended St. Francis Grade School and Quincy Notre Dame High School.

Beginning in July of 1944, he served in the Navy V-12 Program, a unique initiative designed to recruit commissioned officers during World War II and allow young men to pursue college degrees while serving on active duty. Charlie continued his education at Mercer University, ultimately receiving his juris doctorate degree.

After graduation, Charlie returned home to Quincy. On June 10, 1950, he married the late Nancy Wright. Together they raised seven children in Quincy, instilling in each a desire to serve the community. The success achieved by the Scholz children, serves as a testament to Charlie and Nancy's characters, as well as their dedication to the family and their faith.

Charlie has been a successful attorney in Quincy for years; but he is known equally well for his continuing efforts to give back to the community.

For 25 years, Charlie served on the board of directors of the Quincy Free Public Library. During his tenure as president of the library board, volunteers carried out a successful campaign to raise funds for a new library. Charlie also served board of trustees of the former St. Mary's Hospital in Quincy, first as a member and then as the board's president.

Charlie founded the Quincy Notre Dame Foundation to help support his alma mater. He served on the board of governors of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor Foundation, Inc. and served as a member of the Board of Land of Lincoln Legal Services Foundation. In addition, Charlie was a past member of the Board of directors of the Community Foundation of Quincy.

The late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve." Well, Charlie Scholz has taken that declaration to heart. He lives a life committed to his family, his faith, and his community. I congratulate him on receiving this award and thank him for his years of service.

VIRGINIA TECH TRAGEDY

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I wish to express my heartfelt condolences to the family of 35-year-old Christopher James "Jamie" Bishop, one of the victims of the tragic Virginia Tech shooting rampage that occurred this week. He was teaching an introductory German language course in Norris Hall when the shooting occurred.

Jamie Bishop grew up in Pine Mountain and attended the University of Georgia, where he earned a bachelor's

degree in German studies in 1993 and a master's degree in German linguistics in 1998. Additionally, he was a Fulbright Scholar at Christian-Albrechts-University in Kiel, Germany, in 1993 and worked as an academic technology liaison at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

It is clear that Jamie Bishop touched many lives with his personality, his sense of humor, his numerous talents, his passion for teaching, and his love of scientific art. In fact, those who were close to him have said he talked about "changing the world with art." He has been described as an intelligent, artistic, caring, gentle, and polite individual.

It is difficult to fathom how something like this could happen, and words can't fully describe the grief we all feel as the weight of this tragedy settles over our Nation. My prayer is that, through faith and resolve, our country will emerge from this disaster in unity and strength as together we find healing from this sorrow.

Julianne and I will keep his wife Stefanie Hofer, who is a member of the Virginia Tech faculty, as well as his parents Michael and Jerri Bishop in our thoughts and prayers during this time of sorrow.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS JOSEPH ADAM
MCSWEEN

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I wish to honor U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Joseph Adam McSween of Oak Harbor, WA.

Petty Officer McSween will be remembered as a loving husband and father, a dedicated friend and sailor, and a strong leader. After graduating from Georgia Christian High School, he received a track scholarship to York College in York, NE, where he would later graduate in 2001 with an associate degree. While there, Petty Officer McSween was recognized as a natural leader and participated in campus leadership activities. He also met and fell in love with his wife Erin Hammitt while they were students together. They later had two daughters: Lily, age 5, and Gwyneth, age 2.

On April 6, 2007, while serving near Kirkuk, Iraq, as a demolition specialist with the Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit 11, based at Whidbey Island, WA, Petty Officer McSween and two others passed away when a rocket hit their humvee. McSween was 26 years old. He was awarded the Bronze Star "V", Combat Distinguished Device, the Purple Heart, and the Combat Action Ribbon at his military service.

Adam was not a Nebraska resident, but he chose to be buried in York, NE. His very close friend, Petty Officer Randy Leppell, U.S. Navy, had this to say at the funeral: "One thing I remember about Adam, one story he told was that he called back to some crazy little town called York, Nebraska, which I'd never heard of, and he told

me he hadn't been to the school for a while. But the admissions officer still remembered his name. He said, 'This is Adam.' The Admissions Officer said 'Adam McSween?' He couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. I think it speaks volumes for the people of York."

Hundreds of people from York and many other areas of Nebraska and surrounding States, people who never even knew a young college student named Adam McSween, came to his funeral and lined the streets, proudly displaying the American Flag as the procession made its way to Adam's final resting place in Greenwood Cemetery in York, NE.

In addition to his wife and two daughters, Petty Officer McSween is survived by his parents Bob and Florence McSween; his two brothers Robert and Kyle; and his sister Angela. I offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Petty Officer McSween. He made the ultimate and most courageous sacrifice for our Nation. I join all Americans in grieving the loss of this remarkable young man and know that Petty Officer McSween's passion for serving, his leadership, and his selflessness will remain a source of inspiration for us all.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the Brady law requires prospective gun purchasers to undergo a criminal background check before they are able to obtain a firearm from a federally licensed firearm dealer. It was created to prevent felons, fugitives, domestic abusers, and other prohibited persons from gaining access to guns. However, there are significant holes in this legislation that permit exploitation by those who wish to avoid criminal background checks and still obtain guns.

In 1993, President Clinton signed the Brady bill into law. This law required a waiting period for handgun sales until records were available to instantly check criminal background of prospective gun purchasers. Once the National Instant Check System, NICS, became operational in 1998, the Justice Department maintained background check records on approved purchases for 6 months in order to ensure that felons and other prohibited buyers were not mistakenly approved. In 2001, the Justice Department shortened this record retention period to 90 days, the actual amount of time it takes to ensure proper audits of NICS.

Under the Bush administration, however, Attorney General John Ashcroft sought to require the records of approved purchasers to be destroyed within 24 hours. In July 2002, the Government Accountability Office, GAO, issued a report on the potential effects of next-day destruction of NICS background check records. It concluded that destroying these records within 24 hours would prevent the Government from auditing the NICS system to en-

sure its accuracy and "would have public safety implications." The GAO warned that a corrupt dealer could provide the FBI with a different name than that of the actual buyer to obtain approval for the name of the false purchaser and then proceed with the sale to the actual prohibited buyer. Such a scheme would be nearly impossible to detect with background check records destroyed before the ATF could audit the dealer. Citing his concern about the privacy of gun owners, Attorney General Ashcroft ignored the GAO report and the 24-hour record-destruction provision went into effect.

Another loophole in the law is that it applies only to sales by licensed gun dealers, not to private transfers between unlicensed persons. Approximately 40 percent of gun sales are between private persons, such as at gun shows. Only six States require background checks on all firearm sales. According to the ATF, almost one-third of trafficked guns are acquired at gun shows and flea markets. These gatherings present the perfect opportunity for unlicensed sellers to offer countless guns for sale with no questions asked. People who would not pass a background check in a licensed gun store are able to purchase as many guns as they wish at gun shows.

Between the enactment in 1993 and 2005, the Brady Act has prevented approximately 1.4 million convicted felons and other prohibited persons from buying guns from licensed retail dealers. Without NICS records, law enforcement officers do not have the opportunity to retrieve a mistakenly sold gun in order to protect against its use in a crime. I urge my colleagues to pass commonsense gun regulations which would put an end to these gaping holes in our gun laws.

THE STATE OF SMALL BUSINESS MANUFACTURING

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, today I commemorate National Small Business Week, which President Bush designated for April 22-28, 2007. As ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I have made it one of my top priorities to champion our Nation's small businesses and manufacturers and promote their needs and concerns. Our top job creators deserve nothing less. The fact is, small businesses are the driving force behind our Nation's economic growth, creating nearly three-quarters of all net new jobs and employing nearly 51 percent of the private sector workforce. It is essential that we in Congress continue to support small businesses ability to grow and expand so our economy can accelerate forward and create more jobs.

I can tell you, there is no higher priority for me than bolstering the state of our Nation's small manufacturers. In Maine, more than 20,700 manufacturing jobs disappeared between August 2000 and August 2006. We here in